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## More is Not Always Better - Getting Just the Care You Need is Best

Getting the right amount of care – not too little and not too much – is part of good quality healthcare and a smart use of two important resources: time and money.



- Getting too little care can lead to more serious health problems that may be harder to treat. This can not only be bad for your health, but may also end up costing more in the long run.
- Getting too much care, or more care, than you need will take more time, will not help you get better any faster, and can sometimes be harmful. Some tests, surgeries, and medicines have risks. Sometimes simpler treatments work better and are safer.
- Getting care you do not need also adds costs. Whether the money comes out of your own pocket or is paid for by your health benefits, it is a waste of anyone's money to spend it on care that is not needed. When employees are given care they do not need, the cost adds up quickly for the whole company. This leads to higher premiums, less coverage, or higher out-of-pocket costs in the future.

Adapted from the AIR/National Business Coalition on Health  
"Communication Toolkit: Using Information to Get High Quality Care"

### About MHMC

The Maine Health Management Coalition (MHMC) is made up of employers, hospitals, health plans, and doctors working together to improve the value of healthcare in Maine. For more information about MHMC, or to obtain reliable quality data about local doctors and hospitals, please visit [www.mhmc.info](http://www.mhmc.info).

### Success Story – Blake H.

#### Research and Shopping Around Can Lead to Better and Less Expensive Care

Having a high deductible health plan helped Blake to become a smart healthcare consumer when he tripped and hurt his knee. By shopping around, he got the right care at a lower cost.

After learning about his treatment options, Blake decided to get physical therapy to treat his knee injury. His doctor suggested that Blake go to one therapist close to where he lived, but since Blake had a high-deductible health plan and would be paying for the treatment out of his own pocket, he wanted to make sure to go to a physical therapy practice where he would get the best value.

He visited three physical therapy offices before making a decision. The physical therapist that the doctor recommended charged \$75 for every 15 minutes. The other two wanted about \$22 every 15 minutes. He chose one of the less expensive ones since the quality was good and also he got a month of free access to their equipment when the therapy ended.

"What I learned from this experience is that it is important to shop around,"

# Blake's Story

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Blake says, "Buying healthcare is no different than buying a car or anything else. You want to compare your options, get the best value, and make the best choice for you." Blake said it was not always easy to get the information he needed, but in the end it helped him make the best choice.

## Healthcare Resources

Website:

[www.healthcarebluebook.com](http://www.healthcarebluebook.com)

The Healthcare Blue Book is a free consumer guide to help you determine fair prices in your area for healthcare services.

Book: Questions Patients Need to Ask

Many doctors contributed chapters to "Questions Patients Need to Ask," a new book on issues ranging from how to ask about infection-prevention measures to what to do if a technician drawing blood misses a vein too many times — after the second try, the book suggests, ask for someone else. The book is available online for \$19.99 on amazon.com.



# Tips to Get the Right Amount of Care

How can you know whether you and your family are getting the right amount of care – not too little, not too much – but just right? Here are some tips:

1. **Call for information and advice.** If you think you might need care but you are not sure, you can call your doctor's office or health plan. Talking with someone in the doctor's office can help you decide whether you need to come in for care and how soon you need to be seen. You may need an appointment, or you may be able to get advice over the phone on how to handle your problem and what symptoms to watch for.
2. **Ask questions.** Ask questions to be sure that you understand why the care is needed and what it is supposed to do. Make sure you understand your treatment options and why your provider is recommending one treatment over the others.
3. **Look for more information on your own.** When you have health concerns or decisions to make, find health information to help you understand your condition and treatment choices, and to know what questions to ask about your care.
4. **Get a "second opinion."** If you have a big choice about treatment, and your doctor has made a recommendation, it is good to check with another doctor also. Your doctor will expect you to get a second opinion. Check with your benefits department or health plan to see what you need to know about getting a second opinion.

## What is the "Right Amount" of Care?

Getting the "right amount" of healthcare means that you are getting as much care as you need, but not unneeded care. Here are some examples:

"Right Amount of Care"	Unneeded Care
Having lab tests done when you need them.	Repeating the same lab tests when you see another doctor.
Getting antibiotics for an infection that is helped by antibiotics.	Getting antibiotics for an infection like the common cold.
Getting the preventive care and screening tests that are recommended for your age and health condition.	Having preventive care and screening tests more often than needed.
Going to your doctor or primary care provider (PCP) for routine needs.	Going to a hospital emergency room for routine health care needs.



Maine Health  
Management Coalition

Bringing Healthcare Value  
to the People of Maine

This newsletter is brought to you by the Maine Health Management Coalition and its members. For more information, please visit the MHMC website at [www.mhmc.info](http://www.mhmc.info) or contact Crescendo Consulting Group at 207-774-2345 x17 or [mhmc@crescendocg.com](mailto:mhmc@crescendocg.com).